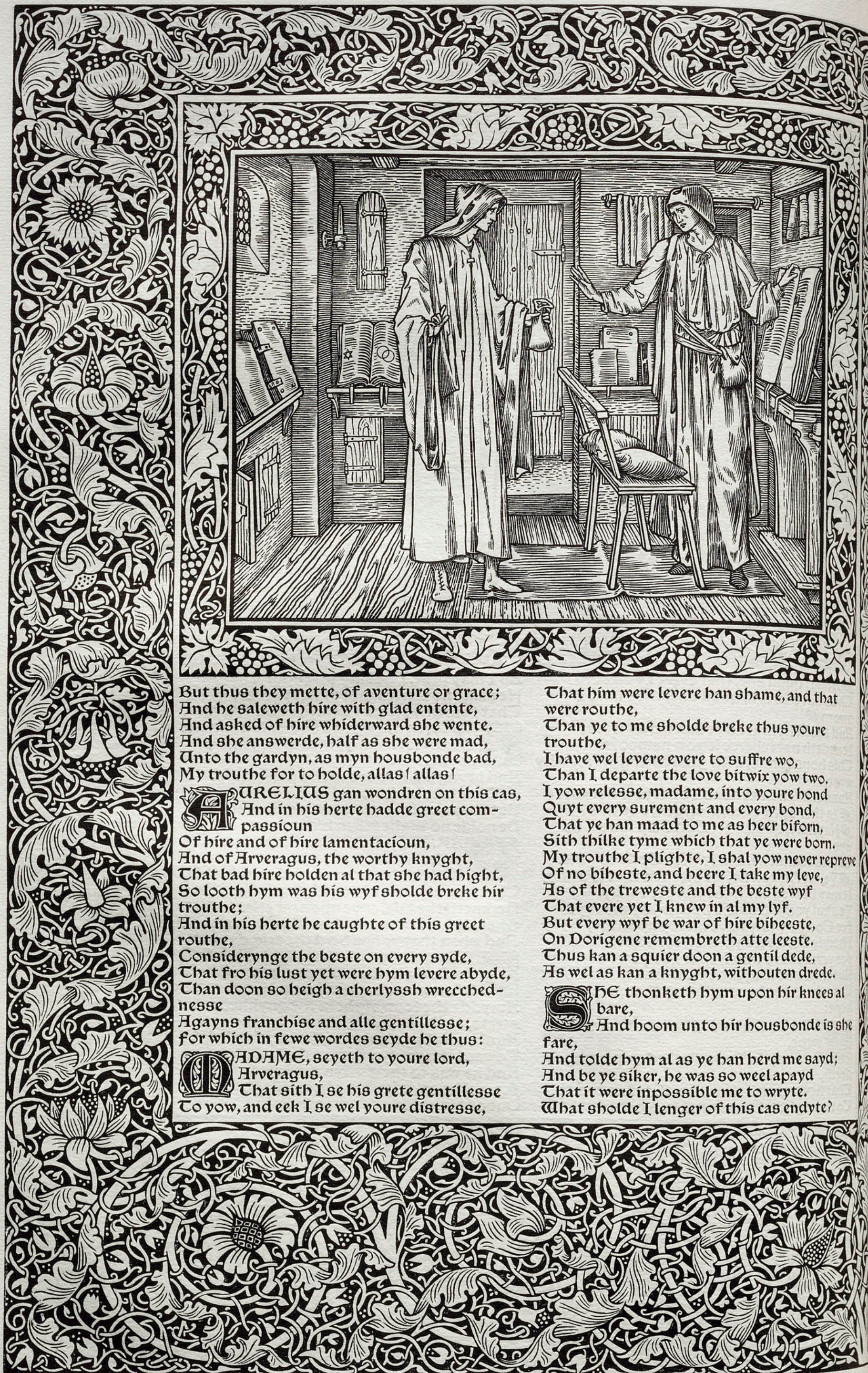




But thus they mette, of aventure or grace;
And he saleweth hire with glad entente,
And asked of hire whiderward she wente.
And she answerde, half as she were mad,
Unto the gardyn, as myn housbonde bad,
My trouthe for to holde, alas! alas!

AURELIUS gan wondren on this cas,
And in his herte hadde greet com-
passioun

Of hire and of hire lamentacioun,
And of Arveragus, the worthy knyght,
That bad hire holden al that she had bight,
So looth hym was his wyf sholde breke hir
trouthe;

And in his herte he caughte of this greet
routhe,
Considerynge the beste on every syde,
That fro his lust yet were hym levere abyde,
Than doon so heigh a cherlyssh wrecched-
nesse

Agayns franchise and alle gentillesse;
for which in fewe wordes seyde he thus:

MADAME, seyeth to youre lord,
Arveragus,
That sith I se his grete gentillesse
To yow, and eek I se wel youre distresse,

That him were levere han shame, and that
were routhe,
Than ye to me sholde breke thus youre
trouthe,

I have wel levere evere to suffre wo,
Than I departe the love bitwix yow two.
I yow relese, madame, into youre bond
Quyrt every surement and every bond,
That ye han maad to me as heer biforn,
Sith thilke tyme which that ye were born.
My trouthe I plighte, I shal yow never repreve
Of no biheste, and heere I take my leve,
As of the treweste and the beste wyf
That evere yet I knew in al my lyf.
But every wyf be war of hire biheste,
On Dorigene remembreth atte leeste.
Thus kan a squier doon a gentil dede,
As wel as kan a knyght, withouten drede.

SHE thonketh hym upon hir knees al
bare,
And hoom unto hir housbonde is she
fare,
And tolde hym al as ye han herd me sayd;
And be ye siker, he was so weel apayd
That it were impossible me to wryte.
What sholde I lenger of this cas endyte?

Arveragus and Dorigene his wyf
In sovereyn blisse leden forth hir lyf.
Nevere eft ne was ther angre hem bitwene;
he cherisseth hire as though she were a
queene:

And she was to hym trewe for everemoore.
Of thise two folk ye gete of me namoore.

AURELIUS, that his cost hath al
forlorn,
Curseth the tyme that evere he
was born:
Alas! quod he, alas! that I
bihighte

Of pure gold a thousand pound of wighte
Unto this philosopre! How shal I do?
I se namoore but that I am fordo.
Myn heritage moot I nedes selle,
And been a begger; heere may I nat dwelle,
And shamen al my kynrede in this place,
But I of hym may gete bettre grace.
But natheles, I wol of hym assaye,
At certeyn dayes, yee by yee, to paye,
And thanke hym of his grete curteisye;

My trouthe wol I kepe, I wol nat lye.
With herte soor he gooth unto his cofre,
And broghte gold unto this philosopre,
The value of fyve hundred pound, I gesse,
And hym biseceth, of his gentillesse,
To graunte hym dayes of the remenaunt,
And seyde, Maister, I dar wel make avaunt,
I failed nevere of my trouthe as yit;
for sikerly my dette shal be quyrt
Towardes yow, howeve that I fare
To goon a begged in my kirtle bare.

But wolde ye vouchesauf, upon seuretee,
Two yee or thre for to respiten me,
Thanne were I wel; for elles moot I selle
Myn heritage; ther is namoore to telle.

HIS philosopre sobrelly answerde
And seyde thus, whan he these wordes
herde:

Have I nat holden covenant unto thee?
Yes, certes, wel and trewely, quod he.
Hastow nat had thy lady as thee liketh?
No, no, quod he, and sorwefully he siketh.
What was the cause? tel me if thou kan.
Aurelius his tale anon bigan,
And tolde hym al, as ye han herd bifore;
It nedeth nat to yow reherce it moore.

Eseyde, Arveragus, of gentillesse,
Hadde levere dye in sorwe and in distresse
Than that his wyf were of hir trouthe
fals.

The sorwe of Dorigen he tolde hym als,
How looth hire was to been a wikked wyf,
And that she levere had lost that day hir lyf,
And that hir trouthe she swoor, thurgh in-
nocence:

She nevere erst herde speke of apparence;
That made me han of hire so greet pitee.
And right as frely as he sente hire me,
As frely sente I hire to hym ageyn.
This al and som, ther is namoore to seyn.

HIS philosopre answerde, Leeve
brother,
Everich of yow dide gentilly til
oother.
Thou art a squier, and he is a
knyght;

But God forbode, for his blisful myght,
But if a clerk koude doon a gentil dede
As wel as any of yow, it is no drede.
Sire, I relese thee thy thousand pound,
As thou right now were crosen out of the ground,
Ne nevere er now ne haddest knowen me.
for sire, I wol nat taken a peny of thee
for al my craft, ne noght for my travaille.
Thou hast ypayed wel for my vitaille;
It is ynogh, and farewell, have good day!
And took his hors, and forth he goth his way.
Lordynges, this question wolde I aske now,
Which was the mooste fre, as thynketh yow?
Now telleth me, er that ye ferther wende.
I kan namoore, my tale is at an ende.

Heere is ended the frankeleyns Tale.

The prologe of the Seconde Nonnes Tale.

THE ministre & the norice unto vices,
Which that men clepe in Englishsh
ydelnesse,
That porter of the gate is of delices,
To eschue, and by hire contrarie hire
opprese,

That is to seyn, by leveful bisynesse,
Wel oghten we to doon al oure entente,
Lest that the feend thurgh ydelnesse us hente.

for he, that with his thousand cordes slye
Continuently us waiteth to biclappe,
Whan he may man in ydelnesse espye,
He kan so lightly cacche hym in his trappe,
Til that a man be hent right by the lappe,
He nys nat war the feend hath hym in honde;
Wel oghte us werche, and ydelnesse withstonde.

And though men dradden nevere for to dye,
Yet seen men wel by resoun douteles,
That ydelnesse is roten slogardye,
Of which ther nevere comth no good encrees;
And seen, that slouthe it holdeth in a lees
Oonly to slepe, and for to ete and drynke,
And to devouren al that othere swynke.

And for to putte us fro swich ydelnesse,
That cause is of so greet confusioun,
I have heer doon my feithful bisynesse,
After the legende, in translacioun,
Right of thy glorious lif and passioun,
Thou with thy gerland wroght of rose and lilie,
Thee, meene I, mayde and martir, Seynt Cecile!

Invocacio ad Mariam.

AND thou that flour of virgines art
alle,
Of whom that Bernard list so wel
to wryte,
To thee, at my bigynnyng, first I
calle;